

Message

From: Mutter, Andrew [mutter.andrew@epa.gov]
Sent: 11/27/2018 3:13:57 PM
To: R8 SLT [R8_SLT@epa.gov]
CC: Faulk, Libby [Faulk.Libby@epa.gov]
Subject: News Article - "Anaconda athletic stadium reopened after tests show lead, arsenic 'below levels of concern" - Montana Standard

FYSA:

https://mtstandard.com/news/local/anaconda-athletic-stadium-reopened-after-tests-show-lead-arsenic-below/article_a6dceb63-62ea-56ce-9788-af2591b3ecac.html

The sign stating that Mitchell Stadium is contaminated and closed has come down, and the field is open to the public.

Anaconda-Deer Lodge County tested dirt from the hole dug in the field in late October for arsenic and lead contamination. The results came back Monday showing that both arsenic and lead are "below the levels of concern," said Justin Barnes, school superintendent, through an email.

Barnes said that though the Copperheads' season ended earlier this fall, residents use the stadium for exercise, and that use can now continue.

The Environmental Protection Agency said the sign should have never gone up. In a letter to Barnes sent after the controversy began, EPA said recent "soil sample results from Mitchell Stadium were found to be well below residential cleanup standards established by EPA for the Anaconda Smelter Superfund site." nation sign removed

In a subsequent letter from EPA dated Nov. 19, EPA expressly took issue with the sign the school had put up on the stadium that stated it was contaminated.

"EPA again requests that the School District take down the sign at Mitchell Stadium which says that the stadium is contaminated."

EPA said in its letters that the rail line found buried in Mitchell Stadium "was almost two feet below surface."

At that depth, EPA said contamination would not pose a risk.

EPA sampled Mitchell Stadium last spring for contamination. The school board signed off on EPA's plan to sample the stadium last winter.

But Barnes said last week that, for the school, the issue was one of trust. The school board signed onto that plan believing there was no rail line under the stadium. Workers stumbled on the rail line by accident in late October when investigating a slump in the field believed to be caused by a leaking water pipe.

EPA also said repeatedly the school board erred because workers did not get a permit to dig in the stadium. Because of EPA's "waste in place" solution for Anaconda, the county issues digging permits for any excavation that is greater than one cubic yard of soil. Those permits are intended to protect workers in the event they unexpectedly come into contact with heavy metals.

Barnes said last week he acknowledges that the school district did not apply for the appropriate permit ahead of time and called it "human error." He said the district forgot it needed the permit.

Barnes said, through email, that the school may seek further testing to ensure safety to "those doing future projects" at the stadium.

Joe Vranka, EPA Montana Superfund chief, on Monday praised the county's "assistance and quick response" in sampling the soil "to reassure the community."

Atlantic Richfield Company did not respond to a request for comment.